

Mr John Day; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Shane Hill; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Chairman

Division 28: Training, \$324 491 000 -

Mr Edwards, Chairman.

Mr Kobelke, Minister for Training.

Mr I.C. Hill, Director General.

Mr K. Smith, Director, Financial Management and Analysis.

Ms K.L. Jamwold, Director, Employment Programs.

Ms S. Mulvey, Director, Office of the Director General.

Ms G.L.C. Mitchell, Director, Training Resource Allocation.

Mr DAY: I refer to the second dot point at page 480 of the *Budget Statements*, which refers to the commencement of the review of the college funding model. No separate allocation is shown for the various TAFE colleges in the budget papers. Why is that the case? I would like a breakdown, either now or through supplementary information, of the allocations for each TAFE college in the coming financial year and what they were allocated in this financial year. What is the review of the funding model likely to achieve and what changes will flow from it?

Mr KOBELKE: We will address the general question of the review of the funding model first. I will ask the director general to deal with the specifics. The funding model is always contentious because there is a wide range of courses. It is not just a matter of saying that so much is allocated for each student contact hour. A range of factors needs to be considered in funding. If colleges do not deliver on their agreements, they have to return funds. It is a complex model. The director general is far more capable than I am to give details of the model and the reasons for the review, and to describe what will come from the review. We will then deal with the amounts involved.

Mr HILL: The funding review, which involves all the TAFE colleges, commenced last year. It was initiated because existing arrangements had been in place for a few years. Although there was finetuning as each year went on, some college managing directors believed there was not sufficient flexibility. The review is almost complete for introduction in January 2003. The consensus of the managing directors and the directors of corporate services is that there is nothing wrong with the model. The details were more widely understood by the directors of corporate services, who had the responsibility of allocating resources. Although we will provide greater flexibility for them in providing buffers, we were hoping to introduce the new model on 1 January 2003. However, with the amalgamation of the east and west Pilbara colleges and the establishment of Swan TAFE, which will bring together the South East Metropolitan, Midland and Balga colleges, the funding formula as it relates to those colleges will change. Some colleges will move to a higher scale while others will fall into a lower scale. The central theme has been that the funding model should support teaching, learning and assessment. With regard to the specific allocation for each college, colleges are funded and report on an academic-year basis. We do not have those figures with us but we would be happy to provide them; that is, the funds that were allocated this year and the funds that we propose to allocate next year. We have not started the negotiations for next year yet because the delivery and performance agreements are signed off by September for the coming year. If it is of any help, we can provide the figures for last year and this year or we can provide what we currently have. However, the figures for next year can be provided only in September.

[3.10 pm]

Mr DAY: That would be helpful.

Mr KOBELKE: By way of supplementary information, we will provide the funding that goes from the Department of Training to each of the 12 colleges for the current year and the last calendar year.

[*Supplementary Information No B45*]

Mr DAY: Is money transferred between the Department of Education and the Department of Training for vocational education and training courses in schools or from the Department of Training to the Department of Education?

Mr KOBELKE: Federal money comes from two different buckets. The names are changed so often that I cannot remember them but I am sure Mr Hill can.

Mr HILL: VET in schools funding from the Australian National Training Authority amounts to approximately \$20 million a year. That amount is divided across the nation of which Western Australia gets approximately \$2.3 million. That money is then provided to the Department of Education, the Catholic Education Commission

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and the Association of Independent Schools. The money for VET in schools is distributed on a per capita basis. Tuart and Canning Colleges, both of which are adult institutions and, to a large extent, offer second chance courses -

Mr DAY: Is that a second chance for a tertiary entrance examination?

Mr HILL: Yes. That is part of the ANTA scope and boundaries; that is, it can be counted as a training effort by the State under the Australian National Training Authority Act. From 2003, the Department of Training will purchase \$7 million worth of training from Tuart and Canning Colleges under a service agreement.

Mr KOBELKE: Mr Hill referred to the \$20 million that comes from ANTA. Of that money, \$2.3 million comes through the Department of Training but goes out to the non-government sector or the Department of Education. There is also another funding scheme from the Commonwealth that does not deal with the Department of Training.

Mr DAY: What is that other scheme for?

Ms MITCHELL: The Department of Education gets a direct allocation from the Commonwealth VET in schools -

Mr KOBELKE: So that does not come through us. If the point of the question is about our cooperation, a range of TAFE colleges are involved with VET in schools. However, the cost of that is met in an arrangement with the schools or group of schools and we are not providing specific funding for that service.

Mr DAY: Do you mean the cost is met directly by the colleges and schools?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes.

Mr DAY: The minister would be aware of the discussion yesterday in the education portfolio of the possibility of increasing the compulsory age of schooling. The Opposition does not oppose that notion and would welcome community discussion on the matter. However, it is important that we have information on the proportion of those students who are over 15 years of age but still at a school age and are being educated in the TAFE sector. Is there any information in relation to that matter? When we consider whether we require children of school age, but over 15 years of age, to remain in the education system, we are also dealing with the TAFE sector and it is important that we have that sort of information. Is that available?

Mr KOBELKE: Mr Hill may be able to provide some figures in a moment. Clearly, the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mr Carpenter, is picking up a very real issue. The changes made by the previous Government to the school starting age means that potentially children are leaving school at an earlier age. It means that we must rejig the whole thing -

Mr DAY: I am not sure that is the case if we refer to the School Education Act -

Mr KOBELKE: That potential is there. However, we have some time before that will impact because that cohort has only just started moving through. However, an issue that is dear to the heart of Mr Carpenter is that of improving the retention rates of students in schools, which is not to be taken in the narrow sense of just keeping them in school. He and I have been working for some time now on how we can get better cooperation, coordination and coverage of students in that age group between the education and training sectors. I cannot announce anything on that yet because we are still in the process. I will refer to Mr Hill for specific answers on the current system and students who are training in the age group that the member mentioned.

Mr HILL: The last statistics we have are dated 30 June 2001. In the group of students who are 14 years of age and under, 623 are in TAFE. In the 15 to 19 year age group, 35 059 students are attending TAFE.

Mr DAY: That cohort of students must be taken into account when considering school retention rates because if they are in the TAFE sector, that is just as good as being at school. Can the minister tell us anything more about the consideration he is giving to increasing the relationship between TAFE and the school education system and what changes he might foresee happening in that regard?

Mr KOBELKE: In part of an earlier answer I gave, I indicated that there is a good relationship between colleges and particular schools; good things are already happening. However, there is the potential to do much more and we wish to consider models that will improve that cooperation. Therefore, when students want to take up a VET-type program at school, we are able to do that in the best possible way.

Mr DAY: Is the minister considering funding an increased number of places for 15 to 16-year-olds in TAFE?

Mr KOBELKE: We want more places but funding is not the issue at the moment. We are searching for models in terms of how we can improve that cooperation and the easy movement of students from one system into the other or how there can be cooperative ventures between the two systems.

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[3.20 pm]

Mr HILL: I have been told that the figure of 35 059 to which I earlier referred also includes students who are studying VET in schools, TAFE and private providers. The figure for those between 15 and 19 years who attend purely TAFE and private vocational education and training providers is 26 972. There are no VET schools in that figure. The figure for 14-year-olds is 311.

Mr DAY: When we talk about school retention rates, we should look at the educational system retention rates for 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr WALDRON: The first dot point on page 481 of the *Budget Statements* refers to the overseas qualifications unit's facilitated programs for bringing overseas-trained teachers into the Western Australian VET system. What training, if any, is involved for overseas teachers? Do they have to meet a level of English competency? Given that cultural differences can sometimes cause difficulties in teacher-student relationships, what support is available for overseas teachers?

Mr KOBELKE: The member for Wagin's question goes beyond what we are talking about. The overseas qualifications unit is part of TAFE International. TAFE International is an independent unit within the training system. It markets training programs internationally and encourages international students to come to Western Australia. That is its primary role. It also comprises the overseas qualifications unit, which is funded by the State, and which is a part of the national network for the recognition of overseas qualifications. It has a program that facilitates overseas-trained teachers coming into Western Australia. It is simply a recognition unit that helps overseas teachers understand the requirements that we have set down, and assists them in having their overseas qualifications recognised in Australia. It is an administration processing unit, rather than a unit that upgrades overseas teachers' skills.

Mr WALDRON: Does any such unit look at overseas teachers' skills or level of English competency?

Mr KOBELKE: That is what the unit does. It is no good an overseas teacher coming to Australia with a piece of paper that states that he is a teacher. Overseas teachers must have the right qualifications, and that is why we have what is really a business unit that checks overseas teachers' qualifications to determine whether they meet our standards. The unit can then provide teachers with the accreditation that will be recognised. The unit can also assist overseas teachers by identifying the qualifications that they do or do not have. For example, it may advise a teacher that he must improve his level of English competency before he will be accredited.

Ms RADISICH: Dot point two on page 476 of the *Budget Statements* refers to a comprehensive review of the training sector. I am interested in changes that will apply to the east metropolitan region. Will the minister confirm that the independence of the governing councils of the three amalgamating colleges will be retained? Will the minister also confirm that there will not be a reduction in the number of available courses?

Mr KOBELKE: The quality and range of courses and the number of student places will be guaranteed. Indeed, they will be enhanced by the amalgamation. The amalgamation is at the administrative level. The amalgamation of the three colleges into the Swan College of TAFE will not mean the closure of any of the campuses. There will still be a campus at Midland. In fact, the Government has committed to enhance that campus with a new facility at the Midland Workshops. The Balga campus will remain intact. The campuses that make up the South East Metropolitan College of TAFE will also remain the same. The administration of the colleges will be amalgamated, because they are all strong in the traditional trade areas. Therefore, there is a synergy in having the same management across all departments.

Concern has been expressed about the different campuses being spread over a wide area. However, a range of campuses operate already. This measure will better coordinate the management level. For instance, under the present system, a lecturer at Balga cannot be transferred to a campus that offers a similar program, because he is employed by one entity and would need to be employed by a different entity before he could conduct lectures at another campus. Colleges can make administrative arrangements for the sharing of staff; however, it makes better management sense to have the ability to transfer people because they work for the same college. The amalgamation is an administrative issue that will ensure the maximum outcome from our existing resources; that is, our educators and trainers. Although much has been done in this area over the past few years, the commitment to professional development and the quality of training has not been strong enough. If savings are made as a result of the amalgamation at the administrative level, there will be greater opportunity to provide increased training.

Mr MASTERS: I am impressed by the enthusiasm and professionalism of the people I have met at the South West Regional College of TAFE that is based in Bunbury and at the TAFE college at Busselton.

Mr KOBELKE: That is absolutely accurate.

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Mr MASTERS: I am also impressed by the outcomes; namely, the students who have graduated.

I refer the minister to the last line of the table under major policy decisions on page 476 of the *Budget Statements*. Will the minister reaffirm that the purchase of training activity fits within the Australian National Training Authority agreement?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes.

Mr MASTERS: Does that mean there will be additional training over and above what is currently offered at Tuart and Canning Colleges, or is the Government looking to maintain the status quo?

Mr KOBELKE: This is just a realignment; there will not be any additional training. Overall, the Government is increasing student contact hours, but I would be drawing a long bow if I were to suggest that that change is intended. TAFE used to be involved in this area; it is still involved in other States, but that is not the case in Western Australia. We have the potential to do more in this area across our TAFE campuses. Training activity is largely channelled through Tuart and Canning Colleges. The Government is considering purchasing some of the programs, but it will see how they develop. As a result of the realignment, more possibilities will be available in other colleges in the future. However, we are not committed to that currently. This is a first step towards opening up the re-entry program into TAFE through TAFE colleges.

[3.30 pm]

Mr MASTERS: The minister talked about the purchase of training activity. Is that training purchased only from the private sector or does the department also purchase training from other tertiary institutions such as universities?

Mr KOBELKE: The point the member raised on page 476 is an arrangement between the Department of Training and two colleges that fall under the Department of Education. The member has broadened that to the wider question of the purchase of training. Under the ANTA agreement, the department has user choice. That means it is committed to allowing private competition. The previous coalition Government applied that policy in a limited way. In opposition I fully supported that, and that is the policy that we are continuing with. The reason I say we are applying that policy in a limited way is that Western Australia, particularly the regional areas, is generally referred to as a thin market. For example, if we were to put a training effort into Margaret River, which is a small town in the area the member represents, and if a private provider were then to bid for dollars to provide training in that town, we might have to get out of that training effort because we could not economically sustain competition in that thin market in which there was a limited number of people. In most of regional Western Australia, and also in some areas of metropolitan Perth, we would not necessarily get the best training outcomes if we were to allow total competition between public and private providers. However, we clearly provide an element of competition. That competition has been very good in terms of being creative, having people come in with new delivery modes and new approaches, and finding new niche markets in training. However, it has also put pressure on our colleges, and in some ways that has been negative, predominantly in cases in which the training delivery has not been up to the standard that we would like; and, in a few cases, the training has actually been substandard. That level of competition to get money for training has to fit in with ensuring that we have appropriate standards for training providers. It is not part of this question, but we have changed the process to enable us to get a better overview of the standards of training providers. We provide funding to private providers, and they have to contract for that funding. My officers may be able to give more detail.

Mr MASTERS: I am happy with that answer. While we are talking about the Tuart and Canning Colleges, is it a fair assumption that TAFE's involvement in those two colleges will not mean that there will be a reduction in student places elsewhere in the TAFE system?

Mr KOBELKE: We are always transferring student places around the system, because what drives our training system is our responsiveness to industry. To give a simple example, this State has been in the economic doldrums for the past two or three years. Fortunately, it now seems to be coming out of that. The major resources projects simply dried up. One area that was hit by this was metal fabrication. At the training graduation that I attended the other night, there were levels 1 and 2 in metal fabrication but there were no levels 3 or 4; they had all gone out of the system because their companies had closed down or had reduced their work forces and no longer had apprentices and trainees. At a time like that we do not produce as much in that training area, because there is no need. On the other hand, now that we have the potential for major projects on the North West Shelf, the Department of Training will be assessing what trade skills will be required if an extra 3 000 people suddenly go to the north west to develop new projects. We will shift dollars to provide that training, which means other programs may close down. We are always undertaking that shift. It is a similar situation in

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the case the member is talking about. Some areas will be pruned back a bit because we do not have the demand, and those resources will go into areas that have the potential for growth.

Mr MASTERS: With TAFE's involvement in these two colleges, will the Government, meaning the Department of Training hand in hand with the Department of Education, use this as a way of reducing the number of student places - that is, cutting costs, rationalising services and reducing the number of lecturing staff and so on - or is this a genuine attempt to try to make the vocational education and training system more flexible so that it can offer a wider range of services where appropriate and can build in the responsiveness that the minister was just talking about to meet the needs of industry?

Mr KOBELKE: The total number of student places over the whole system is increasing. There are swings and roundabouts within the system. There is re-allocation. There are also greater efficiencies. I alluded in an earlier answer to the amalgamation that will produce efficiencies that can be recommitted into more student places and contact hours.

Mr MASTERS: Efficiencies mainly in administration, I imagine.

Mr KOBELKE: Yes.

Mr MASTERS: There is logic in that, but I am more concerned about the lecturing staff, as the people who have day-to-day involvement with the students.

Mr KOBELKE: That raises other issues. One issue is that the courses that the lecturing staff were previously involved in are no longer running, or the student numbers are down. That then raises the issue of redundancy packages if some of these people want to move out. There may be opportunities for retraining so that those people can move into an allied area. We want the system to be dynamic, because we want the flexibility to meet industry needs. However, a huge challenge for the Department of Training is how to manage a dynamic system. In the past that challenge was able to be met because we had a lot of people who were on contract or temporary. We are trying to bring more people onto some form of permanency. We believe that in order to get quality in delivering the system, we get a better result if we give people a fair term of contract and a greater level of permanency. However, that creates an even bigger management problem, and it restricts our ability to be flexible. There will always need to be compromises, but we are running both of those things at the same time, and that gets caught up with what the member is saying about how we shift staff around to meet changing needs.

Mr MASTERS: One way around that may be to enter into individual workplace agreements with lecturers.

Mr KOBELKE: That is counter to what we want to do. We want to give people some certainty of employment, not casualise them.

Mr HILL: I will comment on the growth in the VET sector as measured in student contact hours. I use student contact hours for the reason that that is what we are held accountable for to ANTA and the Commonwealth. The number of student contact hours in 1997 was 25 621 274, in 1998 was 25 972 397, in 1999 was 28 125 915, in 2000 was 29 490 634 and in 2001 was 30 080 688; and in 2002 it will be above that figure. To reinforce what the minister is saying, although there are swings and roundabouts depending on the training needs of industry, the growth in the system is continuing.

Mr DAY: The second dot point on page 476 refers to the review of the training sector that has been undertaken. Did the decision to close the Carine campus of the West Coast College of TAFE follow any consultation with the community and stakeholders? What will be done with the savings from the closure of that college?

[3.40 pm]

Mr KOBELKE: The primary reason was that there was a general consensus in the college, and by people in training who have spoken to me since, that the location of Carine college is a difficulty. It seems to me to be an excellent campus, and I have been there many times, but the issue is its location. It is close to the coast, so we cut off half the circle of the draw area. It is also on a major road. In fact, it is now at the intersection of two roads, with Reid Highway coming in. It is not on a good public transport route. Therefore, it had a difficulty in attracting the student numbers that we would like. The view was that we should consider providing those courses from a better-located facility. For most of the programs, there is no difficulty with that. The only problem is with the hospitality training centre. The Carine campus houses an excellent hospitality training centre with an extremely good reputation. We need to replace that with a purpose-built facility. We must set up the new centre before we can sell the campus. However, the commitment is that the funds from the sale of the campus will be used for the new headquarters in Midland and for a new hospitality training centre in the northern suburbs. The member for Joondalup is chairing a review committee with wide representation that is looking for the best location and model for that centre. The location has not been predetermined except that it should be in the northern suburbs. The centre could be set up cooperatively with private industry, solely by the college or

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with the involvement of some secondary schools. A number of secondary schools have moved into vocational and hospitality training. The committee will recommend the preferred location and model for a new hospitality training centre. That needs to be done within a fairly short time frame so that it can be constructed and ready for 2004.

Mr DAY: Will the Carine college, particularly the hospitality training centre, continue to function until a new one is provided?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes.

Mr DAY: Will there be a gap?

Mr KOBELKE: No.

Mr DAY: Will the closure of the Carine campus result in redundancies, or will all the staff be transferred elsewhere?

Mr KOBELKE: The changed college structure at the Swan and Joondalup colleges means there will be an assessment of the administrative needs. Many administrative staff will find places, but I cannot guarantee that there will be a need for all of them.

Mr DAY: What about lecturing staff?

Mr KOBELKE: Other than the normal changes, we envisage that the programs run at the Carine campus will continue elsewhere; therefore, the staff will be required, although they will be relocated to the Joondalup campus or possibly the Central Metropolitan College. Implementation committees have been set up. Staff members are on those committees. Those committees will look at how the changes will flow through, the profile of the new colleges and where staff should go. There is no intention to reduce staff numbers. That has been confirmed by the figures that Mr Hill has given that indicate we are growing the system. If any reduction were to occur, it would result from the reduction of the types of programs offered at any college. There has been no targeting of any of the programs run from the Carine campus, nor any suggestion that those programs are on the way out and that the staff involved will not be required.

Mr DAY: I will broaden the issue of staff numbers. The total budget for the training sector is to be increased by \$8 million, which is less than the rate of inflation and therefore represents a reduction in real terms. How will that be handled within the sector? Will that real reduction in funding be achieved through staff reductions?

Mr KOBELKE: We are seeking efficiencies. We have already commented on the range of things in that area. Over several years of the previous Government, the director general and his senior officers delivered improved and increased outcomes with a fairly tight budget. They have been recognised around Australia for the way they were able to do that. All States are battling similar problems. My figures show that over that time - prior to our coming to government - the training department in this State found efficiencies and increased student contact hours without any real or large increase in its budget. The budget shows that increased money will come from the Australian National Training Authority in the following year. We will match that, so there will be an increase. Mike Board, the previous minister, was attempting to drive a hard bargain with then federal Minister Kemp to get those increases. He had not succeeded in that when the Liberal Party lost government. That is nothing against him; the whole of Australia had that problem. The former minister took a tough line and held out for increased money, and I continued in the same vein. We have that increased funding, and the member will see that that is documented to come through in the other years.

Mr DAY: How does the department expect to achieve those efficiencies?

Mr HILL: We are running several exercises. We have talked about the amalgamations and the reduction in administrative services through the streamlining of corporate services. A further exercise is the shared services model, which we are implementing in all TAFE colleges. We expect to achieve significant efficiencies in that area. Rather than having 13 services among the campuses supporting the financial management information system, there will be one service at head office.

Mr DAY: Is that how it used to be some years ago?

Mr HILL: Yes. Through the tender process, we commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to develop a full business case for the training sector to identify what we can reasonably do through shared services without becoming silly about it. We expect many of the backroom processing systems to fall under central services. That would include library, payroll processing, student processing, etc. The vocational education and training sector has many systems that are shared or centralised. For example, the college management information system and the TAFE central admissions system are single-point systems that operate on behalf of the entire

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system. We expect some significant efficiencies from that. The funds that are freed up will be reinvested in training - that is, student places. Under the Australian National Training Authority Act, we are required to negotiate upward movement in student places every year. The question of reducing training places does not arise. However, like the minister said, efficiencies are being sought in core practices.

Mr DAY: Is there a budget for the expected efficiencies over the next 12 months?

Mr HILL: We had a \$3 million adjustment in our budget. We already have a target that we must strike.

Mr WALDRON: I refer to page 482 and the employment programs output. The first initiative refers to the placement of 13 regional employment coordinators to work with regional communities through 150 regional committees. Have those regional employment coordinators been appointed?

Mr KOBELKE: That is maintenance of the existing system.

Mr WALDRON: Where are those coordinators located? Are they located in the city or around regional Western Australia?

Mr HILL: They are located in regional Western Australia. About two or three are here. I will provide the list.

Mr KOBELKE: We will provide by way of supplementary information a list of the location of the regional employment coordinators.

[Supplementary Information No B46]

Mr WALDRON: The third point under major initiatives for 2000-03 on page 485 refers to redefining the role of those regional employment coordinators. It mentions stimulating regional employment growth and engaging the community in employment issues. How will that change the role of those regional employment coordinators?

[3.50 pm]

Mr KOBELKE: This is part of the employment program. It has been in place for about 12 years without a major review. Until recently, there was a commonwealth contribution based on SkillShare and a range of other programs. The state program sometimes involved seed money so that community groups could get commonwealth money for employment programs. When Job Network was set up three years ago, and the Commonwealth Government dramatically changed the way it provided employment services, our outdated model was still in place. The Commonwealth Government contributes significantly more than the State Government to job placement programs. The system was restructured and the State Government's role was no longer relevant. Extensive consultation has been conducted to determine what the State Government should be doing. The feedback is that it should not be plugging the gaps; it should not be doing the things the Commonwealth Government is not doing but should be doing.

The State Government is focusing on employability skills. Our program will no longer be targeted at employment placement, which is what the Commonwealth Government has been doing for some years. Employability skills are those required not only to gain employment but also to strengthen an individual's long-term capacity to build a career and to prosper in a dynamic labour market. It implies qualities of resourcefulness, adaptability and flexibility. We will direct people, but we will not focus on employment placement.

The review is under way. Programs now running will need to be reformed. Letters dealing with the next stage of consultation have just gone out. The model under consideration involves grouping some programs. That will obviously have implications at the local level. We will work with the relevant groups and get feedback about how to progress that model. There is general acceptance that we need to move our focus away from employment placement to employability. We must also determine how to restructure the system to provide the dollars for people to do the work. The proposal letters have been sent out and discussions will be held to finalise that so we can move to the new model in January 2003.

Mr WALDRON: Can we have advice about that when it happens?

Mr KOBELKE: A letter has been sent to the key participants in the system to get their feedback. The member has some in his area. If they are not happy, I am sure they will be knocking on his door.

Mr WALDRON: I am sure they will, too.

Mr O'GORMAN: I refer to the sale of the Carine campus and the Balga campus move to the new Swan TAFE. What reduction in student contact hours will result at West Coast College? Will the college remain viable after those contact hours are removed?

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Mr KOBELKE: This is a very important question, particularly for the northern suburbs. The northern suburbs is a huge growth area. We are reforming the college structure. We would not remove Balga campus and then say that the hours at West Coast College should be reduced. We should look at Joondalup campus as a new college and focus on the northern suburbs rather than Perth, which has Central TAFE. I indicated earlier that, because of the Balga campus's synergies with Midland College of TAFE and the South West Metropolitan College of TAFE, it would better to manage them jointly. They will become part of the Swan campus. We will then look to the northern suburbs, centring on Joondalup and the incredible growth there and further north. It is anticipated that demand for services at the Joondalup campus will increase by 40 per cent immediately, even without the growth factor in the area. That must be managed. Although the Joondalup campus is smaller than the West Coast College campus, it has the potential for huge growth. That will create other pressures on space, buildings and so on. It is envisaged that, because of the type of delivery used at Joondalup campus and the number of new buildings and facilities, it will be able to cater for that increased demand. However, it will cause pressure in the future. Immediate capital works costing \$1.2 million will be carried out at the Joondalup campus.

Mr O'GORMAN: What will that \$1.2 million be spent on at Joondalup campus?

Mr KOBELKE: The area has the TAFE campus, the new police academy and Edith Cowan University. The university is expanding and seeking to move a range of programs to the site. It will be an incredibly good and large educational campus involving three institutions. We need to maximise the connectivity between the three institutions to aid in accommodating the additional students from the Carine campus. To that end, landscaping, lighting, roadworks, car parking, signage, civil works and entry works will be undertaken.

Mr DAY: Is there any allocation for the additional students at the Joondalup campus? The closure of the Carine campus will result in teaching being moved to Joondalup. How will that extra demand be accommodated?

Mr KOBELKE: The money will be there for the additional student places.

Mr DAY: What about facilities?

Mr KOBELKE: The campus has magnificent buildings. The present physical structure will accommodate the additional students.

Mr MASTERS: I refer to page 488 and the \$15.395 million to be spent on Central TAFE. What will that money be spent on? What will the \$550 000 that is to be expended in the forthcoming budget year be spent on? I also refer to page 486. What other learning outcomes will be improved by this expenditure? In other words, what areas of training will be focused on as part of this expansion of the Central TAFE?

[4.00 pm]

Mr KOBELKE: The member for Vasse will notice that in the forthcoming year, \$550 000 has been allocated for the first stage of planning. It is to enhance the central campus on Aberdeen Street. The details will depend on the planning that is to be undertaken in the new year.

Mr MASTERS: Will the planning stage occur over the next 12 months?

Mr KOBELKE: We will not plan the work, then put it aside. The idea is to plan and to develop.

Mr MASTERS: Will the work involve major expansion to the physical buildings or will equipment be put into the existing buildings to improve the learning experiences?

Mr KOBELKE: The Central Metropolitan College of TAFE, as a major institution, has extensive and excellent facilities, some of which perhaps need upgrading. A new art and design centre has been established on the corner of Aberdeen and Beaufort Streets. The land behind that, which is near where the tunnel has been built, is available for development. In the building on the opposite side of Aberdeen Street, I opened a new computer facility a couple of weeks ago, which costs hundreds of thousands of dollars alone; it did not involve new rooms. Extra facilities are needed.

Mr MASTERS: Will it be a mixture of new buildings?

Mr KOBELKE: The buildings will be new, but some of the training programs will be a mix of new and existing ones.

Ms RADISICH: I refer to the priority access initiative in the sixth dot point on page 484. I am keen to know how many employers have registered to take part and what results have been achieved so far in developing employment and training opportunities for young people in the State.

Mr KOBELKE: It requires applicants for state government tenders to demonstrate their commitment to a training culture. The policy covers all state government buildings and construction contracts, excluding housing

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valued at \$150 000 or more, and is being phased into goods and services contracts. It has been developed to help foster a training culture within Western Australian industry, increase entry level training and employment opportunities for young people, provide tangible support to firms who engage apprentices and trainees and contribute to boosting the supply of skilled workers. At the end of September 2001, a total of 1 834 employers were registered in the program and 31 apprentices and one trainee were taken on during the year as a direct result of the policy. It is expected that a further 600 new employees will register under the initiative in 2002-03.

It is one of many initiatives developed to increase the commitment of employers to training. Some employers put in a fantastic effort and many do not. People who win government contracts must make a clear commitment to take on apprentices and trainees. The previous Government initiated the program under the name of the priority access initiative. This Government is proceeding with it and hopes to achieve a much better result because in a range of industry areas, employers' commitment to take on apprentices and trainees has diminished. In many areas, if employers do not recruit apprentices or trainees, people will not get the training because in some fields, training through face-to-face contact in colleges is not delivered. It is crucial that we use this and a range of other means to improve the number of employers who will contribute by taking on apprentices and trainees.

Ms RADISICH: The program is called priority access initiative. How great is the emphasis on the training component? What priority is given to it compared with cost or any other factors?

Mr KOBELKE: The title has always bemused me a little. It was used by the last Government and we were not about changing all the names. It had been promoted and had attracted some interest. We wanted to take it on and make it work better so we stuck with the title, which may be a good or a bad thing.

Another initiative in the area of the Minister for Housing and Works is to make it a firm requirement for contractors to commit to training, rather than just request them to take on trainees if they are undertaking government contracts. We want to tighten the requirement and make sure it delivers many more apprenticeships and trainees.

The CHAIRMAN: I can vouch for that: a contractor missed out on work at the new Eton High School because he was not registered for the priority access initiative.

Mr DAY: The minister might be aware of the desire of people in the small business sector to establish a small business training advisory council. I understand that that does not mean an industry training council. What specific initiatives is the minister considering to address the training needs of small business? Will he consider the establishment of such a small business training advisory council?

Mr KOBELKE: That is a very good question. The needs of small business are extremely important. Small businesses are difficult to contact because they are very diverse and snowed under and they do not read all their mail. Working through a peak body would be one way to progress that, but it will not necessarily solve the problem. We have developed a scheme called Small Business Smart Business aimed at increasing the productivity of the small business sector by increasing small business participation in training. The Small Business Smart Business program provides an incentive in the form of a redeemable training voucher of up to \$200 to WA businesses with fewer than 20 employees for expenditure on training or training-related expenses. Training vouchers are issued by the Small Business Development Corporation network of 27 regional and 10 metropolitan business enterprise centres. The total budget for 2001-02 is \$1.8 million and approximately 7 200 training vouchers were allocated, about 3 000 of which went to businesses in the metropolitan area. That has been a successful program. When I was in Broome early in the year, businesses were keen to see it implemented as soon as possible. They were concerned about delays in getting the next one out. It is popular with small business.

Was the member for Darling Range referring to an advisory council or to a training council?

[4.10 pm]

Mr DAY: A small business training advisory council to advise on policy for training needs. Would the minister consider establishing such a council?

Mr KOBELKE: There are currently 14 industry training advisory boards or councils in Western Australia. The Commonwealth has just announced in its budget that it is withdrawing its funding from those councils. The State Government has not yet resolved what it will do.

Mr DAY: Do any of the existing boards or councils cover small business?

Mr KOBELKE: Not exclusively. Some have active involvement by small business and peak groups that represent small business. It is good to see that small business involvement in the industry sector. The Government might have been able to consider having a specialised council for small business at one stage, but

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we are now facing quite large cutbacks. Those 14 industry training councils were basically funded dollar for dollar by the Commonwealth and the State. The Commonwealth has withdrawn its money. The director general met with representatives of those councils and boards straight after the federal budget was brought down and we are now working through what can be done to try to keep them going. The difficulty is that if the Government were to tip more money into those councils, it would be hard to keep up the improvement in training that it wants to deliver. We are still working through that. I have strongly supported those training councils for some years. I do not want to see them disappear, but it will be difficult to keep them going without federal money.

Mr WALDRON: I refer to the fifth dot point under the major initiatives for 2002-03 on page 485 of the *Budget Statements*. It outlines an initiative to -

Increase the number of apprenticeships and traineeships, with apprentice and trainee commencements of 12,500 of which, one third will be in rural and remote areas.

I will talk about the one-third of trainees and apprentices who will go to rural and remote areas. What new schemes are in place to allow that to happen? Has the potential effect of the new industrial relations legislation on that figure been considered?

Mr KOBELKE: That will be provided through the existing schemes. We are not putting in a new scheme. We want to drive those schemes to deliver. I do not want to just brush over this issue. It is proving difficult. The total number of traineeships has been rising for a few years, but participation in some key areas have been declining.

Mr WALDRON: Have traineeships been rising and apprenticeships been going down?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes. That cannot be reversed overnight. It is something that concerns me. We want to make sure that opportunities can be provided to young people to get training in the industry areas in which it is needed. It is a real battle for us. We have sought the support of industry. Key businesspeople in Perth who are dedicated to training have been cooperating with the department and helping to promote it. We need to do a range of things. We have already spoken about one of the other programs. It is a big challenge, and one that the Government will push hard. Extra money will be provided because we want to produce extra places. That will help deliver the number of positions identified. We must turn it around. There has been a decline in many key areas for some time. Part of the reason for that may be that the economy has been in the doldrums. In 2000-01, the economy shrank by 1.2 per cent. That has had an impact on business; it has affected business confidence and people have been laid off.

Mr WALDRON: There are seasonal conditions in our area.

Mr KOBELKE: We are setting that as a target to drive the existing structure, to make sure that traineeships and apprenticeships are delivered.

Mr MASTERS: Last night I attended a Rotary meeting and sat next to Ian Sharpe, who is a butcher of 30 years standing who now works in the butchering section of one of the large supermarket chains. He said there are no apprentice butchers in the system in Western Australia. Is that correct?

Mr KOBELKE: I am informed that there are.

Mr MASTERS: Through which colleges or institutions?

Mr KOBELKE: The South East Metropolitan College of TAFE. I have visited the meat processing section of that TAFE. It has been confirmed that they are not only traineeships, but also apprenticeships.

Mr MASTERS: The comment he made was that as most butchers are now employed by large supermarket chains, none of which he believed offered apprenticeships, a great need for butchers would develop over the next five to 10 years as the current older generation of butchers retired.

I refer to the significant issues and trends on page 476 of the *Budget Statements*. The third dot point relates to the planned introduction of a local area planning model to allow for responses to local needs and so on. A number of questions flow from that. How local is local? Can the minister give some indication of how localised the area planning will be? Has any thought been given to that issue?

Mr KOBELKE: I will ask Mr Hill to answer those questions.

Mr HILL: We are hoping to introduce this model in 2003. The current training and employment planning function is centralised in the department. Although there is wide consultation and the data input that is sought is multifaceted, there is a view that there should be much greater input at the regional level. In the areas of employment and training, regional industry and community needs, all stakeholders will be given an opportunity to play an active role in determining both training and employability requirements. People who live in the area -

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business owners and stakeholders - will be able to identify and prioritise issues that affect their community, discuss alternatives and identify solutions. It is not done in isolation. We will basically send out data to them to provide a context within which they can come up with their priorities. That feeds back to the department, which puts together the state training and employment profile. That then goes to the State Training Board, which either adjusts the profile or recommends it to the minister, who subsequently endorses it. It includes the regions more actively and provides a direct opportunity to provide input.

Mr KOBELKE: A local region might decide that no butchers were being trained or that it needed fewer hairdressers. The department would buy training from colleges or private providers to provide an appropriate mix in those areas. The setting of the profile in the state plan is important, because it determines where money will go to training programs.

Mr MASTERS: Mr Hill spoke about information sheets being sent out. Will those sheets be sent to the governing councils of existing TAFE colleges, or are we talking about a new community group that will be the planning body, but which is not yet set up?

[4.20 pm]

Mr HILL: I refer the member back to the earlier discussion about the review of employment programs and the new role of the regional employment coordinators. They will be central to the coordination of this. A TAFE college would not necessarily be the recipient.

Mr O'GORMAN: I refer to the second dot point at page 476 of the *Budget Statements*, which mentions an amount of \$2 million to support teaching, learning and assessment. How much of that will go towards the professional development of lecturers?

Mr KOBELKE: The money will be used for professional development. I have some information on why the money is needed and the methods of consultation to determine in which programs the funds will be invested to assist VET lecturers and trainers.

The \$2 million is in addition to existing funding. The additional funding represents a significant increase in the amount of money available for the professional development of lecturers and trainers in the TAFE sector. An amount of \$500 000 from the \$2 million has been allocated to assist colleges to meet trainer qualification requirements. The funds will contribute to the costs of training lecturers in assessment standards as part of the training package for assessment and workplace training. The allocation for salary on-costs in the funding for profile delivery in TAFE colleges includes a contribution of 0.75 per cent for staff professional development. For 2002-03, the total of the funding is \$1 139 030. A further \$250 000 is also available through the professional development support program, which provides professional development opportunities in the form of workplace learning projects for staff in the vocational education and training sector. Commonwealth funding for professional development is also available through LearnScope, which aims to develop skills and knowledge in new information and communication technologies to support flexible delivery in training initiatives. TAFE colleges in Western Australia have been successful in attracting \$187 000 for LearnScope projects in 2002-03. The colleges have also been successful in securing 10 of the 40 projects funded nationally in 2002-03 by the reframing the future program, a national professional development initiative. Securing 10 out of 40 is quite good as that represents 25 per cent of the programs, whereas we normally get only 10 per cent.

Mr DAY: I refer to the two outputs listed under the purchase of outputs at page 477 of the *Budget Statements*. How much interrelationship is there between the activities conducted in both outputs? The outputs refer to vocational education and training services and employment programs. What is the relationship between the activities of the department and those two outputs?

Mr KOBELKE: They are quite different programs. The first output refers to vocational education and training services. It involves the Department of Training providing funding to the colleges and private providers to deliver courses under the Australian National Training Authority agreement. However, there is potential for some agreements to be non-ANTA agreements. We talked about employment programs earlier when we discussed the review. A number of programs are not specifically orientated towards training outcomes; they are focused on employment programs that may lead people into training, such as the Joblink network.

Mr DAY: Does the minister expect any impact on employment programs as a result of recent changes by the federal Government in commonwealth employment programs?

Mr KOBELKE: None has been drawn to my attention.

Mr WALDRON: I refer to the output performance measures at page 483 of the *Budget Statements*. There is a reference to the number of people assisted through the regional forest workers assistance package. A target of

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600 is given for 2002-03; however, a footnote refers to 400 for 2002-03. Is that just a typographical error? What is the correct figure?

Mr KOBELKE: It is a typographical error. The figure should be 600. However, the figure is only a target. The cost of the package is in excess of \$130 million when industry exit programs are included. The figures relate only to training. There is a connection because the Government thought that more money would be spent in the current year; however, business exit applications have been slow coming through. For the current year, it is estimated to assist 500 people instead of 1 000. There has been a lower than anticipated take-up rate. It was anticipated that the average cost would be \$22 412 for each person, but it has averaged out at \$20 823. We envisage that as more people come through the system, a higher cost will be involved in helping individual workers. It is conditional on a range of other things in connection to the forest policy. Firstly, the quota has to be set. That has to be confirmed under the Regional Forest Agreement.

Mr MASTERS: The quota of timber?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes. We have given indicative levels and we will have to shortlist a number of companies. Companies not on the list can use the business exit programs. The employees of those companies can use the regional forest workers assistance package. Other things must happen before we can know how this will flow through. This is the best estimate of the number of people who will apply in the next 12 months.

Mr MASTERS: I refer the minister to page 489 of the *Budget Statements*. Figures are given for salaries and allowances and a footnote refers to the number of full-time equivalent positions. The minister commented earlier about the number of people moving from part-time or temporary work to permanent work. I appreciate the difficulties inherent in that. Do I assume that the minister and the Government have a strong commitment to try to get more people in permanent employment in the TAFE system?

Mr KOBELKE: Absolutely. A range of issues is involved. The member should not confuse temporary employment with part-time employment. People are hired on a temporary or short-term contract basis when there is the potential to have them as permanent employees.

[4.30 pm]

As I have already indicated, there will always be a need to compromise, and some people will always be on contracts. There are people who only want to be on contract, because, for example, they are very successful in their profession but they also have a commitment to training and, therefore, they take up part-time positions imparting that knowledge through one of our colleges. Not only does it suit some people to be on contract, but also it suits the colleges. However, the difficulty in recent years has been that, as a management tool, many people who ought not to have been put on fixed-term contracts have been put on them. Those people should have been permanent employees, but their contracts have simply been turned over. It is very complex to manage that situation legally. Not only do we have to try to get a better balance with more permanent employees, but also we have the difficulty of handling contractual issues under the Public Sector Management Act.

The Premier made a statement that applied to people at entry level 1 of the public sector. The situation within the TAFE system has flowed on from that in a way that we thought was manageable. The next issue across government is that of moving above the entry level. That is being progressed and is taking longer than I would like because of the legal complexities in the Public Sector Management Act. We will then have to see how the system can be applied to the Department of Training as it is not possible to just transfer it across. We will consider how we can put in place programs that provide a larger number of staff with either permanent or more secure employment by offering contracts with a longer term to those who cannot be moved onto permanent employment.

Mr MASTERS: So the TAFE sector is putting a fair bit of effort into trying to meet this commitment of Government to have greater security of tenure.

Mr KOBELKE: If it is not doing it now, it will need to.

Mr MASTERS: Based upon the numbers on page 489 of the *Budget Statements*, 448 full-time equivalents are working in the Department of Training. Could I be provided with a breakdown of the number of male and female staff working in the three categories of employment - permanent, contract or casual - at the Department of Training, including lecturing and non-lecturing staff at the TAFE colleges? I would be happy for those figures to be supplied by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: The member wants permanent, contract and casual employment numbers and he wants that sub-split by gender. We are happy to provide that information with the caveat that we may answer the question a little differently if we have already collected it. I do not want the officers to collect extra information by going back to all the colleges. The data we already have provides part of the member's answer, but not all. It is a huge

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collection issue, in terms of definition, so we will provide information as close as possible to the specific details requested with the resources we already have in the central pool.

[Supplementary Information B47]

Mr DAY: The second dot point on page 476 refers to a \$2 million funding commitment to support teaching, learning and assessment. Is that all provided for in the 2002-03 financial year?

Mr KOBELKE: That \$2 million in funding is for the current calendar year.

Mr DAY: Presumably some of it would have been spent already. Can the minister tell us how it has been spent?

Mr KOBELKE: Some money is already there for staff development and we have topped it up with \$2 million. I read that into the record just a minute ago.

Mr DAY: What are the costs associated with the teaching and learning strategy group; what is the make-up of that group; and is there any input from lecturing staff and union representatives?

Mr KOBELKE: This group was set up to meet the objective of improving the quality of teaching; that is, giving support to the teachers, lecturers and instructors to ensure that they are better resourced and skilled to provide quality training. This is particularly important because over the last few years, with the establishment of the Australian National Training Authority, we have seen a huge growth in training and a major redirection to industry. On the whole there have been huge benefits in that. However, in that major restructuring it was my firm view that many important things relating to the quality of our instructors had been pushed into the background.

Mr DAY: Does the minister mean that many instructors were not being trained in teaching and lecturing?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes, and there were also people who had been trained in those areas but their skills had not been updated. A range of issues flowed from that and I was keen to act, so the matter was taken up through the teaching and learning assessment strategy. I am happy to provide the details of the membership of the group by way of supplementary information. It will contain the membership list of the teaching, learning and assessment strategy group.

Mr DAY: Are lecturing staff included in that information as well as representatives of the union?

Mr KOBELKE: We have requested the union to put forward a name. It is not on this list now, but, hopefully, by the time it gets to the member, it will be there.

[Supplementary Information No B48]

Mr MASTERS: I refer to page 480, major achievements for 2001-02, and the twelfth dot point, which refers to the graded assessment pilot program. What consultation took place with industry, employers and students when the graded assessment pilot program was carried out, in particular, in relation to the need for and appropriateness of this model?

[4.40 pm]

Mr HILL: This matter first came to the attention of the Department of Training around 1999. TAFE students were not happy with the new competency-based assessment grading of pass or hold. In a nutshell, they complained about the fact that when they went out into the marketplace with their certificate, nothing on it reflected their performance in their area of study.

I am sympathetic to that, both personally and professionally. Industry also raised this issue with the Department of Training. In fact, we were contacted by a company in Bunbury that wanted to distinguish between the performance of its apprentices. We sent a curriculum group to Bunbury to help the company with its assessment. A few models are now being trialled nationally. One is being developed by New South Wales, and another two are being developed by Victoria and Western Australia. There has been general support for this among the students, and, to a lesser extent, among employers. Other than a letter of complaint, which was received by the minister from an individual in the metals industry a year or two year ago, the quality assurance and recognition branch of the department and I have not received any major criticisms. The model provides for the recognition of excellence and learning achievement. It is designed to enhance learner motivation and to improve communication between schools, vocational education and training and universities, and to provide employers with additional information about the qualifications of applications for employment. It is a measure that pushes for a national application - that will happen - and it is built on good assessment practices. Money has been spent to support the development of the model, and it has been recommended for stage implementation in the Western Australia VET sector in 2002. The implementation comprises the delivery of professional development, the development of assessment resources, access to moderation activities for the assessors in the

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project, and training as a means of expanding into new study areas. The system is about trenchantly assessing the performance of individual students.

Mr MASTERS: Mr Hill stated that students were concerned about how their personal performance was being appraised. Do I interpret that to mean that they are concerned about how their assignments, exams, and work experience with employers is being assessed?

Mr KOBELKE: The crucial underlying issue is that the current assessment is competency based. When students reach the mark and are accredited, they are simply told that they are competent. They are not told their level of competency. Students want a graded assessment, rather than just being told that they are over the bar.

Mr MASTERS: Will the minister provide more details about the type of consultation that took place with student bodies throughout the TAFE system? Were they given the opportunity to learn about the proposal or to provide feedback?

Mr KOBELKE: I am not sure whether there was any consultation initially. However, progressing the matter by developing a model has involved a range of players. One of the key reasons for taking this step was a 1999 survey that related to the promotion of new apprenticeships. The overwhelming feedback from that survey was that people were not happy with simply being recognised as having reached a certain level of competency. They wanted a grading to indicate how well they had done.

Mr MASTERS: In the next two to three years, will there be a survey to assess the degree of happiness with the new system?

Mr KOBELKE: I will not guarantee that such a survey will be carried out. However, the general approach of the department has been to conduct surveys. Surveys are carried out each year to assess the general performance of colleges. If the member for Vasse is suggesting that a survey be done, he is offering sound advice, and the Government will consider conducting a survey at the appropriate time.

Mr MASTERS: Conversely, if there is no specific survey that questions the method of assessment, the Government will soon hear about any disquiet in the normal course of events.

Mr DAY: I refer the minister to the ninth dot point on page 481 of the *Budget Statements*. How many notebook computers have been supplied to lecturers? How many have been supplied to each college? How many lecturers will receive notebooks in 2002-03?

Mr KOBELKE: The desktop solutions that will enhance training delivery - that is personal computers, laptops and audio visual equipment for lecturers - are due for completion at the end of next month. It is difficult to provide figures when the project is still being rolled out.

Mr DAY: Will the roll out be completed by the end of next month?

Mr KOBELKE: The \$1.7 million is intended to be rolled out by the end of this financial year. Cabling, servers and other aspects will be rolled out in the next financial year.

Mr DAY: Are laptops being issued to lecturers on an individual basis in the same way that they are being issued to teachers? Will lecturers make a financial contribution to the laptops?

Mr KOBELKE: The scheme is not similar to the one in the education department.

Mr MASTERS: Again, I refer to minister to the twelfth dot point on page 480 of the *Budget Statements*. Has any consideration been given to the impact that the new system may have on the workload of lecturers and other staff; or is it not considered a huge impost?

Mr KOBELKE: In part, this question has already been addressed; we have provided additional resources to help staff cope. I am not close enough to know whether there has been any negative feedback. It does not seem to be too burdensome.

Mr HILL: A large investment has been made in the area of professional development to achieve the implementation of the new system.

Mr MASTERS: Therefore, everyone is taking part to determine exactly how it will work, but there are no significant impediments to its proper implementation at this time, and everyone seems to be coping with the adoption of the assessment system.

Mr KOBELKE: The limited feedback I have received from a couple of lecturers has basically been supportive. As with any new scheme, we welcome feedback, particularly if problems arise that must be addressed.

[4.50 pm]

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Mr MASTERS: The same dot point to which I previously referred also states that the program was supported by extensive professional development that was delivered across the State. I presume that was at the pilot stage. Will the minister indicate how many lecturers the Department of Training involved in the pilot scheme? Was it a limited number of lecturers or was it more broad ranging?

Mr KOBELKE: We will have to provide that by means of supplementary information, so I am keen to know the exact nature of the question.

Mr MASTERS: I would like to know the number of lecturers who participated in the graded assessment pilot program that is mentioned on page 480.

[Supplementary Information No B49]

Mr DAY: The last dot point on page 484 refers to the expansion of the Aboriginal school-based traineeship program to 260. Is the minister satisfied that that is an adequate number of places or is there a substantial demand over and above that number? What other specific programs are in place to provide for Aboriginal students in the TAFE sector? Is the minister satisfied that sufficient is being done to provide courses to attract Aboriginal students into the TAFE sector?

Mr KOBELKE: We are doing a lot, but I will not say it is enough. It is a huge problem. In the past few years - this started under the previous Government - there has been a significant improvement. However, it is still early days, and the numbers are extremely low. A range of innovative programs have been running for three or four years, and they seem to be showing good results. We still do not have good completion rates in many of those programs. I am satisfied that there is a range of new initiatives and people are putting in the effort, but I am not willing to say I am satisfied that we are doing enough. We need to do a lot more. I think there was something in the commonwealth budget that related to this matter. It was suggested in the media that some assistance may be forthcoming from the Commonwealth, but we will wait to see what comes through.

The Aboriginal school-based traineeship program is a school-to-work transition initiative in which post-compulsory school students participate in a certificate 2 traineeship while completing their Western Australian Certificate of Education. State and commonwealth agencies have made a commitment to expand the program from 42 to 260 traineeship positions with a full wage subsidy in 2001-02. Subject to the achievement of this target, in-principle agreement has been reached to further expand the program to 450 positions. Currently 129 young Aboriginal people are participating in the program in Western Australia. Another 106 students will be placed upon completion of the structured workplace learning unit by 30 June 2002. Throughout Western Australia, a significant number of young Aboriginal students have expressed a desire to return to year 11 and are keen to participate in the program. The interest shown in returning to school by this age group can largely be attributed to the success of the Aboriginal school-based traineeship program.

Mr DAY: Did the minister say it is intended to increase the number to 450?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes.

Mr DAY: When will that be achieved?

Mr KOBELKE: For the coming financial year.

Mr WALDRON: I refer to page 484, major achievements for 2001-02, dot point eight, which states that the land care initiative aims to continue to provide opportunities for people in regional areas, and that over 50 traineeship opportunities were created, half of which were in regional areas. Will that initiative continue?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes.

Mr WALDRON: Does the minister expect to continue to provide those training opportunities at about that figure, because land care is a growing industry?

Mr KOBELKE: In 2001-02, there were 50 traineeship opportunities, with half in regional areas. The target for 2002-03 is to support a further 50 traineeships and at least five sustainable enterprise projects.

Mr WALDRON: That is good.

Mr O'GORMAN: I refer to the capital works program at pages 486 and 487. Dot point three at page 486 refers to the purchase of a new training vessel for Central West College in Geraldton. It is predicted that that project will be completed in late 2002. What will happen with the current vessel? Will it be sold and will the proceeds of that sale contribute to the \$1.3 million cost of the new vessel, or is that \$1.3 million new money? Will the new vessel be a purpose-built vessel?

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Mr KOBELKE: I am advised that the need is for one vessel, not two, so the Central West College in Geraldton will obviously be quitting the old vessel. The cost of the new vessel is \$1.3 million, and that is what has been budgeted for. The savings, or whatever we may get from selling the old vessel, will come back into the system.

Mr MASTERS: I refer to page 480, the final dot point under major achievements for 2001-02, which talks about TAFE International and its development of markets overseas. What evaluation has been undertaken to determine the direct net contribution of TAFE International towards putting money or other benefits into the Western Australian vocational education and training sector?

Mr KOBELKE: I am interested in that program. The director general, some of the managing directors and I went to India in March this year to promote the opportunities for selling our training and for working cooperatively with training providers in India. I found it very enlightening to get an understanding of the complexity of the market and the range of issues that we need to face up to. There is huge potential in these overseas markets, and a number of colleges in Western Australia are already gaining a quite profitable business from providing that training, so we wish to pursue that potential. TAFE International funds the program out of its profits from bringing in the students and selling the programs. No money from the consolidated fund goes into running the program. It is self-funding. The program also provides profits for the colleges that provide the training. That is the basis on which it works. If the member wants to frame a more specific answer on dollar amounts I will take it on notice and provide the answer.

Mr MASTERS: Before I ask that question, in a more broad sense is there any government or independent assessment of the effectiveness of TAFE International? The minister says that program is funded out of profits. However, those profits could be directed into other areas. Therefore, are we getting a good return on the money invested? Is there an independent or other evaluation of the program to justify its continued operation?

[5.00 pm]

Mr KOBELKE: I have already indicated that the colleges benefit. The colleges do fee-for-service work. If they can also get full-fee paying students from overseas, they will earn a profit. The fees are greater than the cost of providing the service. At that level, there are benefits and returns. To my knowledge, there has not been any external evaluation, so I cannot provide the member with a report. If the member wants to frame a more specific question relating to dollar amounts, I will take it on notice and provide an answer.

Mr MASTERS: On the basis that no evaluation has been made, I would be grateful for supplementary information about the cost of the development of markets overseas by TAFE International Western Australia.

Mr KOBELKE: I can provide figures on TAFE International Western Australia's annual budget and the funding it receives to show what is the net return.

Mr MASTERS: Could the minister also provide the number of overseas students and a break-up of the TAFE institutions they attend?

Mr KOBELKE: We could do that as part of the supplementary answer. I will provide information relating to the annual TAFE International Western Australia budget - what it costs to run the organisation and the total income from the programs it runs - and the number of students coming in through TAFE International and the various colleges they attend.

Mr MASTERS: Could the minister also provide the types of courses those students are interested in?

Mr KOBELKE: I do not want to set people off on the collection of data. I will indicate the major areas rather than identify the courses undertaken by each student.

Mr MASTERS: That is what I meant.

[*Supplementary Information No B50*]

Mr DAY: I refer to the sixth dot point on page 481, which refers to the research that was undertaken in a number of areas. How much did that research cost and who conducted it? Have any results been published, and how can we obtain that information?

Mr KOBELKE: The research was done within the department. We did not contract it out. If the director general explains training packages, the member might understand what is being developed. Under ANTA, there is a national approach to develop training packages. We conducted research into the innovation and flexibility of what is a developing program.

Mr HILL: The research referred to in the budget was undertaken by the department's research and evaluation unit. The first area of research was literacy and numeracy support in vocational courses. In response to the demand for a different type of literacy service, the department has accredited an alternative literacy course in

Mr John Day; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Shane Hill; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Chairman

applied vocational skills. That will provide literacy support to mainstream vocational students that addresses skill gaps in their basic education while they acquire industry skills and qualifications. The second area of research was the implications of the ageing TAFE work force. We have active work force profiles for all TAFE colleges in Western Australia, including information on the current practices for lecturer recruitment, selection and development.

For the third area of research listed in the budget, we commenced a review into the principles and priorities for public funding to help determine the optimum allocation of public funds for VET. That review should produce a set of principles for the optimum allocation of funds, and a set of operational guidelines to give effect to those principles. In other words, we want to determine who pays for what.

Research was also undertaken into VET participation rates, which involved a comprehensive investigation of VET participation rates in Western Australia. Traditionally, VET participation in Western Australia has been 9.4 per cent, whereas the national average is 12.1 per cent. In spite of market segmentation analysis, we have not been able to nail down the reason for that. We are approaching the National Centre for Vocational Education Research about this, and instead of trying to benchmark against a national average, we will compare our figures with those of an equivalent State like South Australia.

The fifth area of research was part-time training delivery. There was a decline in part-time training delivery in metropolitan TAFE colleges between 1995 and 1999. This is contrary to an increase in other modes of training. This provided some interesting results, which suggested that increasing competition from private providers and timetabling and qualification structures were the reason for this. Under the user-choice model, people have the ability to go to a training provider that best meets their requirements.

Mr DAY: Is participation declining because of greater competition in the sector?

Mr HILL: No; I am referring to the reasons for the decline in the number of part-time students and the increase in full-time students.

We also did research into attrition in the provision of apprenticeships and traineeships. That is an issue throughout the nation, and the minister has alluded to it. The range of new-generation employers has not come through the training system. Those employers do not have corporate memory of the importance of continued support for these programs. That is providing the sector with some significant challenges, and is accelerating with increased globalisation and the shortening of business cycles.

That is the sort of research that was undertaken.

Mr DAY: Was that mainly done internally?

Mr HILL: Those studies were done internally, but not all our research is done internally.

The appropriation was recommended.

Sitting suspended from 5.09 to 7.00 pm